

## REVIEW by EMILY ANDREWS

The International Flute Course at Woldingham advertised itself as “World-class tuition in a wonderfully friendly, non-competitive and supportive environment”. That is pretty much exactly what I was going to say about the course in retrospect!

So as my thunder’s been stolen in that department, I’ll talk about it in a more personal light: what did I get out of the course?

Most importantly, we learnt how to practise, not just what and for how long. One of the hardest things about practising efficiently is not knowing what you don’t know. Thanks to this course I am now acutely aware of what I don’t know, so I have plenty of new things to try in my practising. The skills taught ranged from the fundamental tones, colours, breathing and posture, to more avant-garde techniques such as polyphonics, singing while you play, and circular breathing. Plenty to be getting on with until next year!

Another great thing I take from the course is an enormously increased knowledge of the flute repertoire – hearing so many other musicians’ pieces in their masterclasses has given me a very exciting “must-play” list that will last me for some time! We heard lots of new music too, which is always wonderful – Clare did a particularly funky rendition of Mike Mower’s Sonata, which was written for her(!), Ian’s performance of his new piece “Touching the Ether” was mesmerising, and Tim played a little known Train piece in friendly competition with Ian’s “The Great Train Race”.

Perhaps more unusually, I also came away with a new love of the saxophone - what a wonderful instrument! A side-effect of having the course at the same time and place as the saxophone course was that we went to each other’s recitals, tried each other’s instruments, and generally cross-pollinated (in an entirely innocent way of course!)

While the course was pretty intensive, we did find some time for fun in between the flute-playing (and even during). I particularly enjoyed circular breathing in the swimming pool (Ian is so dedicated to teaching the flute he’ll even get up at 7.30 with a hangover to teach in the pool!) and dancing the night away with the sax players on the jazz night. The curry night was great too, and thanks to Clare’s relentless optimism on the weather front we managed to nab the nicest evening of the month for it.

We all left the course with renewed enthusiasm and determination: Most of the people there were already pretty certain that the flute is and will be a major part of their lives. However, all the staff were so clearly passionate about the flute that it was totally infectious – at the very least we bought all their CDs, but also most of us have gone away totally determined to do better: they set a fantastic example to follow! Having the chance to play with a world-class accompanist like Tim is also incredibly inspiring, and great fun.

So if you’re thinking of going on this course next year – do! Quite a few people do the course every year, but don’t let this put you off if you’re a first-timer like I was. The course caters for all ages and levels and not everybody studies music (although most do). It really is a wonderful learning environment. See you next year!

Emily Andrews